



School Nutrition Programs

This weekly newsletter from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) is dedicated to providing education, training, and technical assistance opportunities to school nutrition professionals, helping to ensure seamless operations for those participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Child Nutrition Programs. If you are the food service contact for your school or facility, please be certain that everyone on your team has access to this important information.

Tip of the Week

Wellness Policy Reminder: Foods Not Sold

The local school wellness policy must include set nutritional guidelines for food and beverage not sold but available on campus during the school day. This includes class parties, classroom rewards, and any food brought in by an outside organization. These nutrition standards are created by the school and are not set by the USDA or state regulation. It is important to ensure all school personnel, volunteers, and groups are aware of and following the nutrition guidelines as stated in your wellness policy. Food items offered during the school day that are sold to students must meet Smart Snacks standards and school meal standards. For additional information, visit [IDOE's wellness policy webpage](#).

Farm to School

Indiana Food Day 2025

Food Day 2025 celebrates corn! After 10 years of Indiana Food Day celebrations, this is the first time the Hoosier staple has been selected. Food Day is a promotional event that focuses on a different food item every year. We pick the product; you pick when your Food Day is and how you celebrate. This year, we are expanding the months of participation and looking at it as more of a food-of-the-year celebration. We will give seeds out in the spring semester, and the learning begins there. Procure local corn or corn products at any point in the year to take part in the celebration! More information, including a toolkit and registration link to get seeds, stickers, and more will be coming soon. We will wrap up the celebration in October, Farm to School Month! Join us on [Wednesday, March 19, at 2:30 p.m. ET](#) for a kickoff webinar where the Indiana Grown For Schools team will walk through the details of Indiana Food Day and answer any questions.

Harvest of the Month Pilot

The Indiana Grown for Schools Network is thrilled to announce an exciting opportunity for you to participate in the school year 2025-2026 Harvest of the Month Pilot Program. The program will begin in August 2025 and end in May 2026. This innovative initiative aims to connect schools with locally grown, fresh produce while educating students about healthy eating habits and sustainable agriculture. By joining the Harvest of the Month pilot, you will play a crucial role in shaping the program's future success. Sign up [here](#) by Friday, April 11.

Farm to School Highlights

[The Imagination Lab](#) at Plainfield Community School Corporation has been incorporating gardening into its activities for years; growing multi-colored carrots, herbs, and cucumbers. They just added a greenhouse that they plan to use to house hydroponic units that will grow cucumbers for their cafeteria. Students and volunteers will work to grow the plants and harvest the cucumbers. The cafeteria staff would use the cucumbers on the lunch line. This product is something the staff already process and it has worked as a perfect local addition to the line.



USDA Foods

USDA Foods Annual Pre-Order Forecast Survey

The USDA Foods Annual Pre-Order Forecast Survey will close on Friday, March 7, at 4 p.m. ET. Once the survey closes, it cannot be reopened. School food authorities (SFAs) must complete the survey in [CNPweb](#) under the surveys tab, by the deadline, in order to receive USDA Foods for school year 2025-2026. For useful information and resources, please review the [Preparing for the Annual Pre-Order Forecast Survey guidance](#). A recording of the Maximize and Master the USDA Foods Survey: Plan, Prepare, Succeed webinar can be accessed [here](#).

When completing the survey, respondents may see the following message:
You do not currently have a NSLP information sheet for program year 2026 in a "pending approval" or "approved" status. You must complete the enrollment process for the National School Lunch Program before your FDP information sheet can be certified and approved.
This message can be ignored. Schools will need to complete this requirement at the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year.

OJ Singles Removed from USDA Foods Forecast Survey

OJ Singles 100277 have been listed on the USDA Foods Survey for school year 2025-2026, however due to a poor crop this item will not be available until further notice. Please remove all entries for this item under the fruit category on the survey. IDOE is working to have the item removed from the survey entirely.

USDA Foods and DoD Fresh Orders and Deliveries

Schools should begin preparing for the end of the school year. Allocations end on Wednesday, April 30. USDA Foods deliveries (based on delivery periods), USDA Foods for Processing, and DoD orders end Monday, June 30. Schools should make plans for ordering and utilization. USDA Foods for Processing pounds remaining will carry over to school year 2026 depending on usage and availability. DoD Fresh funds will not carry over.

Receipt Deadline Has Changed in FFAVORS

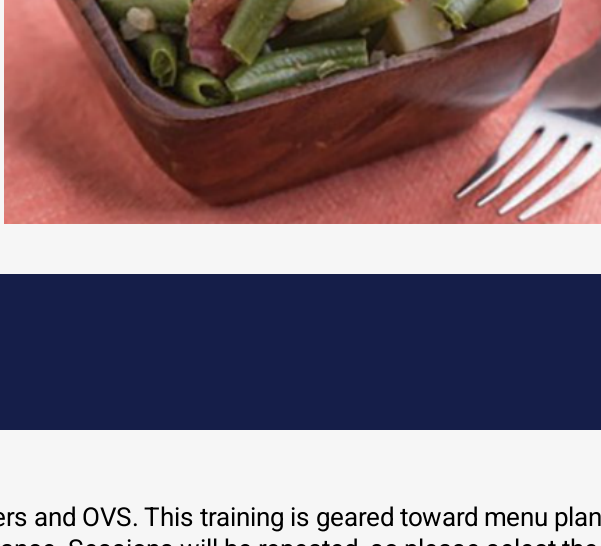
USDA has changed the deadline for schools to receipt DoD produce receipts into the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Order Receipt System (FFAVORS) has changed to two calendar days after the produce delivery instead of the original five day deadline.

New USDA Foods Survey Offerings

There are three new USDA Foods offerings on the 2025-2026 annual pre-order forecast survey. They are [pulled chicken 111881](#), [frozen apple juice cups 111790](#), and a product that can serve as a vegetarian option, the [black bean burger patty 111860](#). All these items are frozen and are listed in the survey in CNPweb under the 2026 Surveys tab in the chicken, fruit, and vegetable categories respectively.

USDA Foods Recipes

Use your USDA Foods [canned](#) or [frozen](#) green beans to prepare this variation of [green beans and potatoes with smoked turkey](#). This recipe must be adjusted to meet serving sizes and meal patterns.



Training and Webinar Opportunities

In-Person Meal Pattern and OVS Training

IDOE is excited to offer in-person training on breakfast and lunch meal patterns and OVS. This training is geared toward menu planners, but all staff who would benefit are welcome. Attendees must register in advance. Sessions will be repeated, so please select the date and time that best meets your needs.

- [Tuesday, February 25, from 1 to 3 p.m. ET at MSD of Decatur Township School for Excellence](#)
- [Thursday, February 27, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. ET at Noblesville Schools Educational Services Center](#)

Reducing Added Sugars at Breakfast

Per the 2024 final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines](#), product-based limits for added sugar will be effective beginning July 1, 2025 for breakfast cereal, yogurt and flavored milk. Join us to learn about the requirements for limiting added sugar at breakfast, how to determine added sugars in products, and tips for reducing added sugars. Thursday, March 6, at 10 a.m. ET. Register [here](#).

Reminders

Ramadan Meal Service Waiver

USDA approved IDOE's [waiver request](#), allowing program operators to seek approval to serve meals in a non-congregate setting to children at schools operating the School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program who are fasting in observance of Ramadan. The waiver is effective from February 27, 2025, through March 31, 2025, though SFAs and sponsoring organizations may only operate non-congregate meal service during their local observance of Ramadan. Under the SFA approval, IDOE's local program operators may offer meals for participants to consume in a non-congregate setting, adjust the time of meal service, and serve meals in high schools without using offer versus serve during Ramadan in 2025. Contact your assigned field specialist for more information.

FDA Declares Coconut No Longer Considered A Tree Nut as Major Food Allergen

On January 6, 2025, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a guidance document titled: [Final Guidance for Industry: Questions and Answers Regarding Food Allergens, Including the Food Allergen Labeling Requirements of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act \(Edition 5\)](#). The document provides a table of tree nuts (page 15) that the FDA considers major food allergens. Coconut is not on this list. The FDA further clarifies that because coconut is not a tree nut, it should not be included in the "Contains" statement on food packaging. Sponsors that have students with a tree nut allergy should check with the student and parents/guardians prior to serving foods containing coconut as the student may have an allergy to coconut. Contact [Margo Birk](#) with additional questions.

Application for Indirect Cost Rate FY 2026 Now Available

IDOE's Office of School Finance has opened the Indirect Cost Rate application, which is due by Monday, March 31. Local educational agencies (LEAs), including school corporations and charter schools, that provided Form 9 financial information for FY 2024 are eligible to apply for a restricted and unrestricted indirect cost rate for FY 2026. New charter schools are eligible to apply but will be subject to the median rate. The application process is available on the Form 9 dashboard located within IDOE's [LINK Portal](#). The Office of School Finance cannot calculate an unrestricted indirect cost rate for private or non-public school corporations because there is not a source of data being reported to, and the School Nutrition program area can no longer approve indirect cost reimbursements for the non-profit school food service account. Contact [icr@doe.in.gov](#) with any questions.

The Urban School Food Alliance (USFA) Survey

USFA, as part of a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is distributing a [survey](#) to gather feedback on challenges and training opportunities around school food procurement (the process by which school districts purchase food, equipment, supplies, and services all related to child nutrition programs). The anonymous survey will take approximately 10 minutes and will close on Wednesday, February 26. You will also have the chance to enter a drawing to attend a school food culinary training at the Culinary Institute of America. Take the survey [here](#).

Updates from Our Partners

Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) Meal Talk Webinar: Reducing Sodium in School Meals

Join ICN and USDA's Team Nutrition Initiative on Thursday, February 20, at 3 p.m. ET for a Meal Talk Webinar on Reducing Sodium in School Meals. Healthy Meals Incentives Lunch Trailblazer Awardees from Prescott School District 402-37 in Washington and Urbandale Community School District in Iowa will share innovative ideas and best practices in reducing sodium and engaging students in menu planning. In addition, participants will learn about USDAs Team Nutrition resources, the ICN's Shaking It Up! resources, and the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards. Register [here](#).

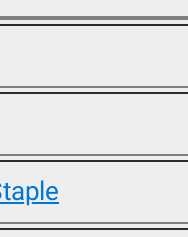
Healthy School Recipes Culinary Webinar

Join Healthy School Recipes for a culinary webinar sponsored by the American Pulse Association on Wednesday, February 26, at 2 p.m. ET. This is a free, interactive culinary education for all K-12 school nutrition professionals. Learn easy techniques to increase use of pulses (chickpeas, beans, lentils and dry peas) in your school nutrition program with dishes that are contemporary, nutritious and flavorful. This webinar will showcase versatile recipes that pack in the protein, flavor and student appeal. Register [here](#).

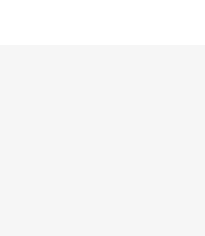
Building Better Breakfasts Culinary Training

A healthy, protein-rich breakfast is the smart way to start the day, but reducing added sugar can be challenging for school nutrition programs. This webinar will showcase versatile recipes that pack in the protein, while reducing added sugar! Join us Wednesday, March 5, at 2 p.m. ET for live chef demonstrations of practical recipes, efficient techniques and important nutritional insights. This training is sponsored by the American Dairy Association of Indiana and the United Dairy Industry of Michigan. Register [here](#).

Upcoming Dates



Thursday, February 20, at 3 p.m. ET	Reducing Sodium in School Meals webinar
Tuesday, February 25, at 1 p.m. ET	Meal Pattern and OVS in-person training at MSD Decatur Township
Wednesday, February 26, at 2 p.m. ET	Pulses: Nutritious, Versatile, Sustainable, a Fresh Look at a Menu Staple
Thursday, February 27	Nominations due for School Food Service Employee of the Year
Thursday, February 27, at 1 p.m. ET	Meal Pattern and OVS in-person training at Noblesville Schools
Monday, March 3, through Friday, March 7	National School Breakfast Week
Wednesday, March 5, at 2 p.m. ET	Building Better Breakfasts Culinary webinar
Thursday, March 6, at 10 a.m. ET	Reducing Sugars and Breakfast webinar
Thursday, March 6, at 2 p.m. ET	Rise and Dine: Discovering Global Breakfast Flavors
Friday, March 7, at 4 p.m. ET	USDA Foods Annual Pre-Order Forecast Survey Deadline
Wednesday, March 19	IASBO School Nutrition Seminar
Wednesday, March 19, at 2:30 p.m. ET	Food Day 2025 Kickoff webinar



Additional Resources

School Nutrition Programs Calendar
IDOE's Nutrition Webpage
CNPweb